

March 3, 2021

**Written Testimony to the Education Committee
SB 948: An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut
and SB 949: An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Money-Follows-the-Child
Approach to Funding Public Education**

By Billy Bromage New Haven, CT (10th Senate District)

Good morning Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Billy Bromage, and I live in New Haven, in the 10th Senate district, represented by your committee colleague Senator Winfield. I am also the parent of three New Haven Public Schools student, as well as of two recent graduates from the NHPS system.

I would like to share my thoughts briefly on two bills you are considering in the hearing today, SB 948 and SB 949. As a longtime public school parent, in an urban school district, I am deeply opposed to both bills.

Tying together the funding levels for public schools and charter schools, as SB 948 proposes, is an idea that is flawed at its core. Granting equal funding to charters, when they operate with little to no accountability to the public, and do not accept all of the students that come to them to be educated like traditional public schools do, amounts to a theft of much-needed funds from the public by private organizations. While charters have their place in a state that rightly provides options to kids and families, they do not deserve the same public funding that our traditional public schools, the bedrock of our society and its shared future, deserve.

To add a new and brazen level to the theft of public funds that is being attempted in the hearing today, SB 949 is an outright money grab by people who want to have their cake and eat it too. Providing vouchers to students to take their funding with them to attend non-public schools undermines the very fabric of our society, and would create grave unpredictability in funding for school districts like New Haven, where my own children will be educated for the next decade plus. I fully support any parent's right to choose an alternative educational path for their child. There is no right, however, to take public funds to pursue that alternative path. Our school district already struggles to meet its obligation to educate New Haven kids, feed them, and keep them healthy, safe, and thriving. Allowing private interests to create schemes to take away the much needed, public money would be an egregious error.

I encourage the committee to reject both SB 948 and SB 949. They are both clearly wrong and potentially destructive steps in the wrong direction for our public education system in Connecticut. Our kids are counting on you. I thank you for making the right decision, and for reading my testimony.